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## **John Henry Newman on University: Actuality of a 160 Year Old Discourse**

### **Abstract**

*Newman's famous treatise on university written during the spring in 1852 was originally a set of lectures dedicated to the founding plan of a new Catholic University in Dublin. While he was having a hard time because of judicial accusation in the so-called Achilli case, Newman defended with his treatise two major ideas of integral university education necessary for whichever autonomous incipient of scientific knowledge as well as its development. My intention here is to investigate these two aspects. As first, it is the knowledge as its own end in its relation to learning, and second, his defence of the position of theology (and religion) among other disciplines within the university's curricula. They belong as key footnotes to a much more important question regarding the autonomy of university education and the collegial character of knowledge. Newman's original discourse is an episode of his total dedication to the collegiality of educational process. Because the university is a civilizational achievement and not a question of political or of some other hierarchies, the reflection on education might (or should) be the turning point of the change of university's institutional life. The question is not of how many subjects must be included in the curricula for education to be universal, but what the relation among them is. With some other accentuation, the paper is interested in happenings in the development of European universities in recent decades.*

### **Key words**

autonomy, collegiality, education, functional systems, liberal knowledge, religion, theology, university, John Henry Newman

## **Introduction**

It is not surprising that Newman's *The Idea of a University* (in continuation *Idea*) still enjoys the reputation of one of the basic texts on the university and on liberal education. Newman connects the historical dimension of the European university (with its three basic sciences: theology, law and medicine, comprising other four liberal arts from the Middle Age: grammar, rhetoric, logic, mathematic) and the development of the English university at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in which he actively participated. The nucleus of the university studies and (positive) academic freedom was not only that the university *had to teach* and that students *had to learn* but, as Newman insisted, that subjects – if they were only taught – were in danger of being emptied. The primary object of the university is, for him, that education remains education and not only training. From another part of Europe, from Berlin, came the idea of a university as commonly constructed knowledge through research.

It makes sense that students receive more than certain information and techniques to meet certain concrete demands and situations that represent struc-

tured liberal knowledge. Liberal knowledge is structured so that it enables students to reconcile two tendencies, the strongly motivated applicative research within natural sciences and the old-fashioned hierarchical knowledge in some humanities. It is not complete equality which liberal knowledge is dealing with, but the interdependence among all sciences.

Defining the university today is not a matter of putting together the *universal*, *knowledge* and, maybe, *-city* because the *univer-city* is (might be) in many prospects a matter of living on borrowed time and space. Does the university represent a dwelling place, a city, a community? Or perhaps it tries to disassociate universality, knowledge and city with its depths, with specialization, far from enjoying the benefits of being educated? For those who are unwilling to understand the word university and already have a notion which rejects presumptions of another unspoken institutional universe, the university is an enterprise which does not imply an inclusion of those from the edge of society, rejecting social obligations and intimating unwillingness to behave ethically. It is a hard statement in front of the situation present at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Nearly all who are looking for literature on this subject probably know the famous book *The uses of the university*, written by Clark Kerr first in 1963 during his presidency at the University of California. He found out, among other things, that a substantial majority of universities are among the oldest institutions in the Western world. Among 85 institutions which exist in recognizable form for 500 years or more, and function uninterrupted through that time, 70 are universities. Only fifteen of them are other institutions, like the Catholic Church, The Parliament of the Isle of Man, of Iceland and of Great Britain, several Swiss Cantons etc. Kings and feudal lords are gone. These seventy universities are still in the same location, the majority of them within the same buildings, with the same aims, with the same way of agency, with the same inhabitants, students and professors, with the same kind of governance and so on (Kerr, 2001: 115). These institutions are certainly not enterprises or joint-stock companies, even though many of them today are fighting for visions and operations which would represent something more than “spirit of time”, such as a responsive university, an initiator of social change, the systems approach and critical thinking, institutions which understand links between humanity, the broader ecosystem and culture (Rojas, 2009).

If we know precisely what was the critical moment of change at the “planet university” (M’Gonigle and Starke, 2007) – which strongly connected university with economy, development and scientific progress – we could diagnose the loss of its most traditional qualities as well as foresee the university’s contribution to dignity and sovereignty in things which relate to all people. In the era of modern society, universities have been centers of political discourse and catalysts for social development. We should not forget the role of the students’ demonstrations in 1848 in Germany and Austria, in 1911 in China, in the sixties in Japan, Vietnam, USA, India, in 1968 in many states worldwide, in the seventies in Canada and especially in Chile. The year 1968, when the protest encircled the globe, has been retained in good memory. But since the seventies universities became relatively quiet. Recently, many things could be going different. Some new initiatives, for example the “sustainable university”, are concerned with characteristic issues that ought not to be postponed, and bring new tasks for the university.

The foundation of the Humboldt University of Berlin in 1809 with its strong emphasis on research and, on the other side, on community between students

and teachers significantly influenced other European and Western universities until today. Since then two main models of a university prevailed: the just mentioned Humboldtian model (highly empirical scientific work with the highest level of autonomy and academic freedom) and the Oxfordian model (educational work, liberal education with the same aim to join educational work with innovative social change and resistance against dominant powerful rules of elites). With their strong emphasis on community of students and professors as well as on autonomy of universities and of academic freedom, the academics have been at the centre of historical change. Even though the moral/social revolt of students in 1968 represents one of the loudest periods of universities in their distinction between authoritarian values and hypocrisy and the connection between knowledge and reality, the challenges at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are still greater. The student's revolt in 1968 did not succeed. Rather different was the understanding of what liberal education means. The Humboldtian model was referring to the freedom of research and technological development. The period of the relatively silent university in matters concerning social justice and ecological wealth after 1970 is not representative and is likewise not an incentive.

“The demands today are even greater, and the issues even more urgent than those that inspired such campus activism 40 years ago. (...) This book is about making more visible an incredibly important institution that, surprisingly, remains invisible” (M’Gonigle and Starke, 2007: 12).

This paper sheds light on that “incredibly important institution” through Newman’s preoccupation and in some way obsession with improving the condition, status and argumentative basis in the widening of knowledge (etc.) through education. He foresaw, in some sense, the historical turnabout of the academia, in which the fundamental question was metaphysical, to the utilitarian one where knowledge is not free any more (Pieper, 1964). Two arguments which will be exposed, namely the meaning of liberal knowledge and the position of theology in the university curriculum, account for it.

### **Newman’s *Idea of a University* and its establishment**

After his conversion to the Catholic Church in 1845, John Henry Newman was facing isolation at his occupation (at the time in Birmingham) and with unfounded expectations of catholic authorities to take position against his former community as well. This dilemma culminated in 1851 when Newman accepted the invitation from Archbishop Cullen from Dublin in connection with establishing a new Catholic University in Ireland. Newman had agreed with him to be appointed Rector of the new university and to help with its founding as well as in its organization. His decision to collaborate in that project gave already birth to the idea to know better the conditions of higher education in Ireland. Though the idea of some lectures on education which should “persuade the people that education should be religious” (*Idea*, Editor’s Introduction, XXIX) came from the Bishop, Newman decided to give some lectures on university education in general with the intention to satisfy, on the one side, the divided Irish hierarchy, and on the other his own lifelong interest in liberal education. It was not only a decisive trait against the so-called mixed education which represented a kind of safe clerical (vocational) teaching of “immutable truth”, but also his concern with the direct end of a university, which is knowledge (*Idea*, Editor’s Introduction, XXXII).

Only few months later a dangerous situation emerged because of Newman's accusation of Giacinto Achilli for his alleged assault of four domestic servants. G. Achilli was an ex-catholic priest who came to England to help in publicity against the Catholic Church in England. It had already been an old story (more than a year) until in November 1851 G. Achilli accused Newman for libel. Newman had no evidence of Achilli's culpability (the witness would not remain). For this inconsiderate accusation, Achilli could deny any allegation against him and began a trial against Newman who was eventually found guilty (June 1852). For this reason, Newman could not leave England for many months. Indeed, he was convinced that it could last for years. Instead of lecturing in Ireland he began writing the discourses which followed. The previously held lectures on education became later the second part of the *Idea* whereas the nine discourses, written and re-written mostly during the second half of 1852, became the core report of Newman's vivid interest in his idea of university education.

This strange connection between Newman's cooperation with grounding of the university and his waiting for trial (Newman was convicted of libel) has critically influenced not only the course of the lectures but also the content of the *Idea* itself. It is impossible here to unfold the whole story of agitation against Newman and the Catholic Church in England, but it was certainly interesting to note that the happening was prepared and guided also from Rome. For this information about what was the position of education and knowledge within the Catholic Church as well as how the leaders (bishops) understood the role of education, namely as *vocational training*, in many views utilitarian and servile, the *Idea* represented intellectually and artistically not only the continuation of Newman's intellectual activity, but also the culmination of his creativity and the witness of his greatest trouble. Even though Newman was not imprisoned, the fine and especially legal costs were very aggravating for him. He urgently needed money, but he had to wait one more year to be appointed Rector at the new university (officially, on 4 June, 1854). The hindrance was the Archbishop Cullen who played a double game: he was covered with Newman's intellectual vigour and in the same time he denied Newman any substantive power at the university. Newman left Dublin in 1858. The reason was not his inability to give the university constant attention, but his disappointment with Cullen's treatment as well as the general understanding of what a university was – or should be – in the Irish Church (hierarchy).

The *Idea* includes nine discourse and ten essays. The ten essays (*Idea*, 247–417) which in the present collection of the *Idea*, edited by E. T. Kerr, constitute its second half were published in *The Catholic University Gazette* from 1854 (when the journal started) to 1858. There were also many other texts on that subject, partly also published in the *Idea* as *Appendices*.

Newman's idea of the university was an Oxfordian one, though the immediate model was that of the Belgian Catholic University in Louvain. This university, *as a university*, the only one for all English speaking Catholics, was teaching "all knowledge by teaching all branches of knowledge" (*Idea*, 145). Newman had to follow allowed circumstances, but he also intended to import the Oxfordian experience to Ireland, not only the inner structure and diversification of that model but also its unity, principles, methods, ways of teaching, and argumentation. The Oxford model, partly designed by Newman since 1830, represented the union of religious teaching and liberal education. At that time Oxford was a university guided by heads of colleges rather than the rector and rectorial council (or representatives of the colleges). So, as a matter of fact,

the Oxford University was still fighting for this unity. As a university model, Oxford represented a community of colleges with rather strong autonomy and weak cohesion among them. In the time when Newman was already involved in foundation of Irish Catholic University, the Oxfordian model was for this reason a wish that the university is situated and lived as a community of colleges rather than a perfect institution possessing excellence.

One characteristic of the Oxfordian model was decisive: the possibility to find and to study all branches of knowledge together. This specific trait of the university as an institution “of knowledge of its own end” (*Idea*, Discourse 5) should be preserved at any price. In fact, Newman deplored the proposed separation of secular teaching from a religious one and called for “the intellectual layman to be religious and the devout ecclesiastic to be intellectual” (*Idea*, Editor’s Introduction, XXIV). The Catholic University for Catholics only would have deepened the already sensible gap between civic society and religious affiliation. It was clear, therefore, that Newman spoke in favor of liberal education. Its meaning was that mere professional training was not sufficient. Though in Discourse 7 Newman wrote that “nothing can be more absurd than to neglect in education those matters which are necessary for a body’s future calling” (*Idea*, 140), the meaning of liberal study was that the university had to determine, how to satisfy the interests of those who need basic education and not to shorten those to whom knowledge itself is a profession.

Newman left Dublin before the university was truly established. His original intention was to found the university with strong scientific departments as well as with its own journal, press, observatory, and so on. He had inestimable quality of having a vision of a university and of what kind of education a university should provide. But he felt himself inadequate of managing it. It is likely that this incompetence was only one side of the coin because he did not enjoy the full confidence of the authorities in Ireland. His demise was, therefore, nearly insignificant in comparison with the success of his *Idea* first published as a book in 1859. The Catholic University of Ireland survived until 1882, when it was merged with the new Royal University of Ireland (McGrath, 1951: 493).

### Knowledge as its own end

Unfortunately, Newman’s *Idea* is all that remains of the unfulfilled project. The fate of the Catholic University was too narrowly connected with the minds of ruling people within the religious community, who would not preserve the educational autonomy. Though it was an idea of a *catholic university* which could develop the same characteristics as the university model of Oxford – where Newman was for many years an active defender of the union between religious (theological, dogmatic) teaching and liberal education. The destiny of that development partly opens the window to Newman’s personal development after 1845, when he left the Church of England and joined to the Catholic Church. He entered in a very difficult period for Roman Catholicism in England, Ireland and some other European countries. With his idea of a liberal model of a university he clashed with the religious-political-utilitarian idea of education which the people ought to receive. On paper, Newman had the freedom to choose but only among offered things. He could hardly attain the possibility to know from first hand about the educational situation of Irish people.



I would stress the basic intention of Newman's *Idea* that the higher (liberal) education is (was) not a reward, but a fundamental question of society on the way to its full emancipation. His intention is summarized in the following quotation: "There is no science but tells a different tale, when viewed as a portion of a whole, from what it is likely to suggest, when taken by itself, without the safeguard, as I may call it, of others" (*Idea*, 94). It is not necessary to study every branch of science or know everything, but to know that different branches of science are not confined simply to their proper subject. A certain division of branches enables the students – the society – to refine tasting, thinking, deciding, having ethical concerns and enlarging it through ethical behaviour in an open space.

"This I conceive to be the advantage of a set of universal learning, considered as a place of education. (...) Thus is created a pure and clear atmosphere of thought, which the student also breathes, though in his own case he only pursues a few sciences out of the multitude." (*Idea*, 95)

Newman calls this education liberal. It is "a philosophical habit", "a habit of mind" which lasts through one's entire life. This type of education which "is the main purpose of a university" creates basic knowledge on freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom. (*Idea*, 95–96)

It is the knowledge *as its own end* which represents a degree of trust in front of every science respectively, and an estimation and value of each particular sphere of knowledge.

"I am asked what is the end of university education, and (...) I answer (...) [that k]nowledge is capable of being its own end. Such is the constitution of human mind, that any kind of knowledge, if it be really such, is its own reward" (*Idea*, 97).

As we can see, Newman's perspective was something beyond objective knowledge with its conveniences which follow thereof, also far beyond any common judgment or public opinion, knowledge as entertainment, curiosity or something of the sort. It is likewise not a perfect knowledge but its very presence in humans as a habit in different environments. It is certainly possible to infer that students can desire to see, to hear and to learn only if they are free from necessary duties and troubles which compel to train (only immediate useful) knowledge.

The knowledge as its own end, called also "*liberal knowledge*" (*Idea*, 99), explicitly includes its bearing upon social life and wider environmental concerns. If it is "in its grammatical sense (...) opposed to servile", a somewhat more detailed explanation in Discourse 5 follows the distinction between intellectual exercises which are highly professional and liberal intellectual exercise "which is independent of sequel, expects no complement, refuses to be informed (as it is called) by any end, or absorbed into any art, in order duly to present itself to our contemplation" (*Idea*, 101). Newman points out his understanding of knowledge as not inferior to professional or useful knowledge which bears fruit but as a distinct class of usefulness without any interests: the possession of liberal knowledge tends to enjoyment (Aristotle, 2004: 18). Newman recognizes that delightful dimension of liberal knowledge as self-recognition of being disciples not only of human knowledge through millennia but of the nature of truth which does not change. He writes:

"[T]he word liberal as applied to knowledge and education, express a specific idea, which ever has been, and ever will be, while the nature of man is the same, just as the idea of the beautiful is specific, or of the sublime, or of the ridiculous, or of the sordid" (*Idea*, 102).

This particular character of liberal knowledge, called also gentleman's knowledge, makes up the scope of the modern university. Its essence is philosophy – and science in an extended sense of the word. Prior to being a power – in relation to its practical use –, “it is a good; (...) not only an instrument, but an end” (*Idea*, 104). Newman sees the university as a place of education where the useful or mechanical education is not a secondary one, but the very perception of things by knowledge as its own end. It means something intellectual which protects things from their mere usefulness. If we summarize, the dignity of knowledge without its immediate usefulness is the germ of each scientific or philosophical process. “[T]his is why it admits of being called liberal” (*Idea*, 104–105).

Such knowledge – as a personal possession, a habit and an inward endowment – requires that the university is a place of education and not of mere instruction. Instruction has little or no effect upon the mind itself, whereas education implies an action upon our mental nature forming the character; it is something individual.

“When (...) we speak of the communication of knowledge as being education, we thereby really imply that the knowledge is a state or condition of mind; and since cultivation of mind is surely worth seeking for its own sake, we are thus brought once more to the conclusion, which the word ‘liberal’ and the word ‘philosophy’ have already suggested, that there is a knowledge, which is desirable, though nothing come of it, as being of itself a treasure, and sufficient remuneration of years of labour” (*Idea*, 105).

Newman's persistence in demonstrating that knowledge does not have an accidental value was oriented against the institutional direction of what to know or to desire. First of all it was the Church which took up philosophy as an object, determining its end, and *using* it. The statement that knowledge does not have any meaning beyond itself is the same as its opposite, namely that someone would be seeking knowledge only for its own sake. Knowledge has also its practical importance, but liberal knowledge, as Newman writes, first of all “ought to benefit the soul” (*Idea*, 106) and “to make men better” (*Idea*, 110). Newman's argumentation included especially also the end of religious knowledge, somehow the same as liberal knowledge whose object is nothing more than cultivation of the intellect and “intellectual excellence” (*Idea*, 111). In the face of the recent events in the sphere of higher education, Newman's argumentation would not have a strong support. It is not only referring to the episode of the *silent* university which already lasts for four decades – it means that the university is a part of social systems and as such dependent on economic powers of the society – but also to the silent agreement between economy and state which gave the power to the economy in its idea of perfecting conditions of life and welfare. This idea of a strong or weak university is inherent in all recent reform models of higher education, as for example in the *Oxbridge model* (*Robbins Report*, 1963), the so-called *unitary (Bologna) model* in the *Lisbon Convention* (1997), the model of the *strong university* in political rhetoric at the millennial edge (Lisbon strategy within EU), the UNESCO's model of the *sustainable university* (Graz 2005), the *univer-city model* (Simon Fraser University, Vancouver), and others, though all of them still accentuate ideals of academic freedom and autonomy.

### The position of theology in the university curriculum

The intention to speak of the position of theology at the university emerges already in the Discourse 1 in the *Idea*. The second one discusses this matter.

But throughout all discourses we are impressed by Newman's twofold anxiety in developing his undertaking. Though the *Idea* is perhaps not the most important Newman's heritage, his own opinion in one letter (1852) was that this book was "one of my two most perfect works" and also the one which put him through the greatest trouble (*Idea*, Editor's Introduction, XVII–XVIII). Both sensations affect the study of this monumental work. In the last discourse, Newman wrote:

"I declared my intention, when I opened the subject, of treating it as a philosophical and practical, rather than as a theological question, with appeal to common sense, not to ecclesiastical rules" (*Idea*, 212).

Both anxieties mentioned before originated from the specific perception of religiosity characterized by narrowness of mind. The religion (Christianity) was rather a thoroughly explored "landscape" than an incentive for searching the personal challenge with the nature of truth and its shaping of characters. The Catholic Church was displeased with theology being treated as a science among sciences. The problem was not only the "unchangeable" dogmatic as such, and especially the religious morality, but the readiness of the Church to allow "travelling only the known determinations". In that sense it would be pointless to try to bring the theology into university system of study. For Newman, however, theology was a science among others forming the community of sciences.

Whereas Newman's apology of liberal education is the main theme of all discourses, it is strongly connected with his passionate searching for a model of the university which could give its members an "acquaintance with every science under the sun" (*Idea*, 129). It is not the question whether the compulsory study or not – in his eyes the university with no professors and examinations would have been better than the university which gives its degrees to any person who passed examinations, because the first one has better discipline of one's intellect – but the question whether the study as training which hollows professions or the study as liberal education that propagates communion between people who "are sure to learn one from another, even if there be no one to teach them" (*Idea*, 130). These two dimensions, the intellectual and the social, show the shape of liberal knowledge in its relation to the whole. This knowledge, which is not only "a portion of a whole" (*Idea*, 94) or a perception of objects as external things is an intellectual exercise inventing methods, principles, connections etc. This wholeness which Newman is speaking of is the community of young people which constitute the university. The students embody a specific idea which "will represent a doctrine, it will administer a code of conduct, and it will furnish principles of thought and action" (*Idea*, 130). Without doubt, it is the main ambition of philosophy.

In his discourses, Newman first of all professes his conviction that the university has to include all branches of knowledge, but at the same time regrets that the Church does not understand its duties toward it as liberal knowledge. Speaking about the ground of this duty, Newman writes: "If the Catholic faith is true, a university cannot exist externally to the catholic pale for it cannot teach universal knowledge if it does not teach Catholic theology. This is certain; but still, though it had ever so many theological chairs, that would not suffice to make it a Catholic University; for theology would be included in its teaching only as a branch of knowledge, only as one out of many constituent portions, however important a one, of what I have called philosophy. Hence a direct and active jurisdiction of the Church over it and in it is necessary, lest it should become the rival of the Church with the community at large in those



theological matters which to the Church are exclusively committed, – acting as the representative of the intellect, as the Church is the representative of the religious principle” (*Idea*, 184).

On the one side, there is the university which, referring to its teaching principles, excludes theology from the sciences which it embraces; on the other side is the Church which neglects those liberal studies and exercises of mind in which also theology mainly consists.

“How then is it possible to it to profess all branches of knowledge, and yet to exclude from the subjects of its teaching one which, to say the least, is as important and as large as any of them? (...) As to the range of university teaching, certainly the very name of university is inconsistent with restrictions of any kind. Whatever was the original reason of the adoption of that term, which is unknown, I am only putting on it its popular, its recognized sense, when I say that a university should teach universal knowledge” (*Idea*, 33–34).

The situation is not easy to estimate. If the university is primarily a higher school of intellect one could suppose that theology as a subject is not very characteristic for a university. But during history, although many of the oldest universities did not teach all sciences, they always thought theology; moreover, they became universities because of this fact, namely that they were teaching theology. The oldest “university”, the so-called *Pandidakterion* in Constantinople, established in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, included 31 chairs, but not theology. In that time, theology was taught in monastic schools. But the term ‘university’ was not used yet for centuries.

The situation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was specific. Two leading models of a university, the Humboldtian one and the Oxfordian one, are two immediate precursors of the university which we know today. So we can clearly see that the debate on this argument was already emerging from the environment where the political principle – its threefold organizational principle: separation, specialization, repetition – was gaining its space throughout society. These principles are regarded as foundations of modern society with growing capacity of production as well as consumption. It is not difficult to demonstrate why the political power does not need very developed explanations of what a university might be because it is, as an institution, indispensable in achieving useful knowledge, certainly also without theology. It is, then, logical to expand technological sciences and to reduce/exclude those which are not so immediately useful.

Moreover, in Newman’s case the exclusion of theology was conditioned by the so-called religious (confessional) duty. It meant that the seats of learning were also conditioned by being Christians. But this was not fully the case. Theology should have been excluded, either “the province of religion is very barren of real knowledge, or, on the other hand, that in such university one special and important branch of knowledge is omitted” (*Idea*, 34). The compromise between religious “parties” which would have their own schooling, and a university which taught no religious subject should have been more acceptable than the endeavour for liberal religious university education.

A much more difficult question about the establishment of the Catholic university was Newman’s provenance and his heredity. There were certain expectations of an Irish subscriber who wanted a Catholic university with a set of sciences commonly studied at universities. The question was what should have been the motive of a university that it would exclude one or more sciences. The question was posed in front of an English (secular) university where the religion in that time was already treated as a private thing so that private views were sufficient and no deeply engaging study of the subject

was needed; in these circumstances religious knowledge represented some sphere of knowledge, something like *non-important-knowledge* – as religion might not consist in knowledge but in feelings and sentiments – if there were made propositions which limited the idea of knowledge. Where this limitation should end, if it is possible at all?

“If a man thinks in his heart that (...) religious facts are short of truth, that they are not true in the sense in which the general fact and the law of the fall of the stone to the earth is true, I understand his excluding religion from his university, though he professes other reasons for its exclusion” (*Idea*, 39).

Newman’s academic reputation was the main reason that in 1851 he was invited to cooperate in the founding of the new Irish Catholic University. The invitation contained solicitation that “a few lectures on education would be also very welcome”. Even though the old Catholic notion of education was that it is referring to knowledge and this, furthermore, influences the act of faith which is an intellectual one and its object the truth – and its result again the knowledge, the situation in which Newman was involved was quite different: the faith – that is the religious act in which the so-called religious knowledge is also contained – was equated with (moral) activity (definite *credenda* means definite *agenda*), commonly known as pietism. In Newman’s eyes this ‘substantial religion’ – which was based “not on argument, but on taste and sentiment, that nothing was objective, every thing subjective” (*Idea*, 40) – was the result of the fact that religion was judged outside of the sphere of liberal (universal) knowledge as mere behaviour. The accepted changes in that field led to conclusions which denounced religion as persuasion, consolation, pleasure, imagination, affection and whatever other than knowledge. In the same sense changed also the meaning of *liberal* education, as for example the four corners of knowledge: “the knowledge of *signs*, (...) of *facts*, (...) of *relations and laws*, (...) and lastly *sentiment*” (*Idea*, 42). These four corners were also reasons why religion was put outside of the sphere of knowledge. But not for Newman who saw religion referring to signs, facts, relations and laws, only not to sentiment, because it had not much to do with truth “which is the main object of religion” (*Idea*, 42).

What was the real motive of this endeavour? We could suppose that one of the important reasons was the avoidance of anxious religion of duties or to discharge the religion of cultivation of feelings, wishes and many other things which hindered an open discussion about so-called mixed education which elegantly separated what should have been connected. But there were also the religious world which held “that religion consists, not in knowledge, but in feeling or sentiment” (*Idea*, 39).

Newman’s position was that faith is an intellectual act, its object truth and its result knowledge, that it is not a mysterious doctrine which should be taught by authority and prescriptions, as tradition, through moral duties and ceremonies. The real problem was, in his view, the regression of religious knowledge, the a priori limited frame of reference, the science which is only a name with unnecessary modesty in expressing beliefs, an infantile believing, abusing ‘religious’ words which mean nothing and so on. The situation in which theology has become only an experiment of abstract reasoning which requires no specific teaching was, as Newman thought, a result of agreement of both sides which were supposedly searching for peace while one side taught that the duties to society were the only object worthy of being noticed, and the other which somehow was content with the assertion that nothing definite could be known about God.

Another reason why theology should be dropped out of university education was that there isn't any distinct science or philosophy possible concerning God or religion because every single thing of God which is known falls under this or that natural science. In the third (*Idea*, 51–71) and in the fourth discourse (*Idea*, 72–93) Newman develops his demonstrations why theology is one among other sciences and therefore an integral part of university education. It is not only the question of the mental process which shows that all knowledge of natural sciences is insufficient for the exhibition of theology – and that theology bears on other branches of knowledge – but it is also the question of fact that as all sciences are interconnected and bear on each other so all branches of knowledge bear on theology.

Even though Newman was resolved to defend the idea of liberal education (*Idea*, Discourse 5), he was cautious when he replied to Bishop Cullen about his idea of the university. There is no historical situation which would have been a priori favorable to the most decided position. Some texts, especially in Discourse 5, where Newman wrote about philosophy as its own end at the university, were suppressed for years before they were published. This text got the green light for publishing only in 1873. Several passages in other discourses were “suspect” because of misunderstanding what Newman was speaking about and what was (should be) university education. *The Idea of a university defined and illustrated* was otherwise published the first time in 1854, but officially only in 1873. The fact that the *Idea* was recognized as a masterpiece of the English literary style, if we consider the whole field of events, was a poor consolation.

### The actuality of Newman's idea today

The idea of a university was growing for a long time during Newman's active experience in university life in Oxford. There are many references in the text of that time when he was fighting for a university as a place of scientific and social progress. Almost all discourses of the *Idea* were subjected to drastic revisions. Some fundamental views remained with original Newman's accentuations.

First of all, Newman was aware of the gap between public opinion on education and the need of a complete and autonomous university. The so-called mixed education was for him a bad compromise which took from education more than it gave to it. If knowledge were not pursued *for its own sake*, as its own end (*Idea*, Discourse 5), any expectation that something would be changed also in the wider social field was in vain. For him, the purpose of education are shaped personalities (gentlemen), “more intelligent members of society” (*Idea*, 6) with cultivated minds.

Newman's concern was the position of theology at the university as well as the position of the university within society. The University which includes all branches of knowledge and is a place of common learning of universal knowledge is the supreme educational institution within society. If there were other institutions which would stimulate philosophical inquiry and extend the boundaries of knowledge, the endeavour for a university would have no sense. The dilemma between the university and even more developed (specialized) institutions of knowledge was known already in Newman's time. In our time this dilemma is providing many differentiations. This idea of the most extended knowledge does not provide connections between humanities and natural sciences. The gap is still deeper, if the principle of liberal education is caught

in its remoteness from any particular form of belief (religious, national, moral and so on). It demonstrates more or less that the university is not an institution of education but of training while other elite institutions of knowledge care for a new social architecture. In that sense Newman's insisting statement that theology is an integral part of universal knowledge, of knowledge as its own end, is understandable, because of its strive for the unknown. In that sense not only theology bears on other branches of knowledge but also other branches are bearing on theology with their feeling of integrity. This connecting-while-distinguishing is (should be) characteristic for all branches of knowledge in their mutual interdependence. The role of humanities in the universe of sciences is that these sciences represent the architectonic pillars of liberal knowledge. Liberal in sense, as already Thomas Aquinas remarked, that they free humans exactly through their being concerned with knowledge (knowing that they know and can know). "Those [arts] which are concerned with utilitarian ends that are attained through activity, however, are called servile" (*Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, I, 3, 59). The idea of some even more advanced institutions of knowledge is therefore a perversion of the ends of knowledge which are not its own.

As previously mentioned, the primary end of knowledge is a philosophical habit. It is not what is remaining from instrumental knowledge but it is the primary meaning of *liberal education*. Liberal educated people are those who refuse to be only informed or absorbed into a particular science, vocation or profession. Liberal knowledge is something we can name with social role of knowledge. It is in some way a philosophically enlarged horizon which instead of being only informed presents itself as simultaneous self-referential activity of the mind, its *operation of distinction*. It is the highest state to which the nature of knowledge can aspire in its viewing many things at once as a whole. This intellectual culture was, in Newman's words, not simply good as a means for some other thing, but it is good because it tends to good or it is an instrument of good (*Idea*, 113–114). It is, in some sense, the opposite of an innocent receptivity and passivity of mere vocational learning which is not yet formed to pose questions about the world, and has not yet stood up to seek knowledge.

Nine discourses represent an inner architectural scheme of a university that is of an institution of knowledge. The Discourse 5 (*knowledge its own end*) is in the middle. With this knowledge we are awoken both to ourselves and to the world. We are reflecting on that world as we live and think. This world is not our product but it is found as something being there before; moreover, it enables us – through our bodies – to reflect upon us. This circularity between mind and world enables another insight: these two apparently divided realities are closely related between them. Newman's idea of a university interestingly demonstrates first of all that the perception is not a science of the world as it is but the deliberate taking of position in front of it as well as in front of subjectivity as such (Varela, Thompson and Rosch, 1991: 4).

The meaning of the relation between knowledge and religion (theology) which is present everywhere in Newman's *Idea*, is likewise a choice of their reciprocal bearing. Ignoring this relation might signify that we are content with unreflective science which is – while it is searching for only useful knowledge – a kind of invisible prison (Myers, 2006: 220). Such a science also presupposes that mind and consciousness are simply tools which are there to be taken. This science is often pictured as a disembodied camera which looks objectively at the phenomena in the world. This kind of science was the op-

position in Newman's endeavor while he distinguished religion from Christianity because of the intellectual culture. Though Newman's loyalty to the Catholic Church persisted, his tendency toward liberal knowledge remained untouched. With the state of things today we have to draw other distinctions but with the same intention to show the circularity between knowledge and its reflective character in its intimate manner of self-referential relating. As for Newman, knowledge and religion are not opposed, but distinguished because indivisibly connected as science and the objective world are not opposed but connected. This Newman's claim deserves a special interpretation because of its argumentation. Today it is not illogical to state that the process of cognition itself is worth of scientific pursuit. If the university claims to teach universal knowledge it might not drop a definite science only because of its immaturity. A similar provocative Newman's statement was the one when he challenged the intellectual culture of his contemporaries who did not recognize the religious form of integrity as crucial in one's personal identity. It could be a matter of rhetoric or of particular understanding of what means university as a place of liberal education but we also can proceed with Newman's simple statement: for its future development it is better to have at least a simple idea of everything than a cultivated intellect which neglects the relation between knowledge and truth. This resolute insisting that knowledge has something to do with the construction of the world, at least the human world, derives from the fact that no one is authorized in directing human knowledge.

Newman reflected extensively upon the possibility of misunderstanding of what liberal education means. With his framing he advocated the ethical character of liberal knowledge. His advocacy of theology as a part of liberal education and thus of the university is therefore twofold: he was, on the one side, against that politics within the catholic university which would have excluded many sciences in the name of Roman Catholicism because of the extreme sensitiveness of dogmatic theology, as well as against the intellectual culture, on the other side, which would have excluded religion because of its incompatibility with secular values. Today we might address similar statements to the university which has to walk this parallel line of mind and nature, of mindful awareness in our investigation of (self)-knowledge and of knowledge in a broad interdisciplinary perspective.

### Concluding remarks

There are many reasons why one ought to reread Newman's *Idea* faced with the manifold crisis at the beginning of this century. It is a condition for someone who is conscious of the need of the positive and liberating "yes" in front of the yet unknown. Newman's *Idea* contains main conceptual frames for further development of the character of the university as a typical institution of Western culture, about the education as operation of distinction as well as of self-referential transformation of Western scientific culture, about the knowledge as mindful awareness, about the functional system of schooling with its own self demarcation frame, basic operations, lead-distinctions and binary codes, programs, tasks, social function and self-description (Schumacher, 2011: 438–439), as well as about the society as a community of different social function's systems which represent (ten) main horizons of human activity and enable citizens to envision spaces of relatedness. For this reason, Newman's heritage, which we have presented only from two viewpoints, can create space also for ethical reflection upon our cognitive activity. In that sense, the *Idea* is a very comprehensive work: Newman's concern about lib-



eral education can really be compared with spontaneous compassion which arises without any need for feedback as its own end. When education is done without the so-called business mentality, generosity can be expected from it. In a certain sense, this knowledge manifests itself as concern for the welfare of others, beyond merely prescriptive justice. The *Idea* is also very analytic in its approach to the responsiveness of schooling system as well as its structures. There is no know-how axiomatic ethical system which might incline someone to imitate ethical situations, but ethical concern is generated through the mindful awareness called non-rule-based ethical skill (Dreyfus, 1991). This characterization of knowledge has nothing to do with satisfying some moral principle. On the contrary, this knowledge which Newman calls *liberal* is a reward of its own. On the other hand, there is no possibility to satisfy desires if the education/knowledge is goal-oriented, conditioned by success, and only an affirmation of someone else's words. Instead of being embodied, this knowledge is aggregated and cannot be transformed in wisdom.

Many of these major ideas, of which two of them were discussed here, were worthy to be discussed in our intellectual culture; it surely might not be realized through rational norms or injunctions if they would not be informed by that knowledge as its own end. Newman's *Idea* was originally presented as a series of lectures given to the heads of the Irish Catholic Church and to the representatives of Irish lay society. His aim was to establish the platform, not so much for Irish Catholic University, but for open discussion about the autonomy of education about 'embodied cognition'. Such an attitude toward education and knowledge might also foster structures which could also facilitate an elaboration of normative frames. Today we are found in a situation with too many rules which instead of helping hinder active participation and democratization in the sphere of education. Already mere theoretical questions on what is recognized as knowledge in a situation where knowledge is very fragmented and specialized show that it is quite impossible to reflect upon a university which is founded on some general idea of universal knowledge. Many modern universities, as those in Slovenia, also have problems not only with its own understanding of universality of everything which constitutes knowledge but also with university community which might be the first aspect of this commitment to knowledge and to society, if there were any concrete community. The fact that the first objective of education is the utilitarian one – education as training, instruction in skills – seems to be the only remaining option.

The so-called social commitment of knowledge which universities had to promote so that students might breathe the atmosphere of thought (*Idea*, Discourse 5) was Newman's elementary idea about what might be all sciences together so that they could enable the "habit of viewing" (*Idea*, Discourse 4). There is no need for everyone to pursue all sciences in order that he/she acquire the ability to see the reality in its complexity; it is enough for once to adjust claims and relations among all subjects which participate in knowledge as its own end (*Idea*, Discourse 5). This habit of viewing, so to say the essence of liberal education, perfects the individual intellect seeing "many things at once and as a whole" and "referring them severally to their true place in the universal system, (...) understanding their respective values, and determining their mutual dependence" (*Idea*, 123).

Newman was not against the utilitarian objectives of the university, such as specializations, professional and vocational studies etc. Utilitarian objectives are, in his eyes, co-dependent originations of liberal knowledge. So Newman

did not speak about these goals in negative terms as they were totally different from liberal knowledge. His assumption was that university principally has to teach and the students have to learn. He pointed out the realization of positively conceived state of knowledge, which is much more pretentious, so that it could shape professional skills. He did not undervalue the historical moment of the natural sciences in the 19<sup>th</sup> century while they experienced their incredible slope. That is why he insisted that the university had to, first of all, promote knowledge as wisdom and freedom of thought; these two were for him indispensable conditions of expansion of mind.

As what regards the humanities, and especially theology, the so-called utilitarian knowledge is still more disputable. It is quite irrelevant when students get certain information and techniques and meet certain concrete demands and situations, if they do not have structured knowledge. Liberal (universal) knowledge enables them in this field to reconcile two tendencies in the sphere of modern sciences, their applicability, and too hierarchically structured knowledge in some humanities. In the field of theology as perhaps the most questionable science the one-sided utilitarian knowledge might be disastrous.

Many connections between Newman's *Idea* and the modern university are to be found in this sphere where the participants in discussion have a constant tendency to improve, to grasp, to possess, to understand, to compete, and so on, while they do not pay attention to the social dimension of knowledge. Newman's known position about individual intellect is that "even false views of things has more influence and inspire more respect than no views at all" (*Idea*, 12), which means that intellect – and knowledge – without its social dimension is unable to do anything. Therefore such tendencies, as for example 'useful theological knowledge', are a kind of 'wooden iron' and can actually cause more harm than benefit. The speed of changes after the Second World War brought back old dilemmas in the sphere of higher education which defined university as a key institution of development – if it is fully involved in economy and as place of knowledge available to all who were qualified for it by ability and attainment from the secondary school – as well as an expensive institution which had to earn its financial means. The utilitarian motive inverted the university orientations so that they became prolongations of economy and politics. It has to balance teaching and research. It produces specialists and highly skilled professionals. The transmission of a common culture and of citizenship is weaker and weaker. Instead of being the institution of social cohesion the university became the institution where students solve their social problems. While the number of students grew exponentially, the leading social systems, economy and politics, did not see the fundamental change in the nature of university education and of acquired knowledge. They were promoting the excellent university (as for example the Oxbridge model in the *Robbins Report*), a model which is not sustainable once higher education changed to towards mass schooling and utilitarian goals. If it was characteristic for the English university in the sixties, the European university changed rapidly at the end of nineties after the so-called Bologna Process (from 1997 onwards).

Let us end with two remarks: first, with the awakening of Newman's idea of liberal education in some European philosophical circles in the midst of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the representative of which is undoubtedly also the German philosopher Josef Pieper in his almost inaugural reflection on (Plato's) academia (Pieper, 1964). The change of the university – from an academic

institution to an economic-utilitarian one – was already in progress for a long time. In Pieper's view, these changes are touching the code of the Western idea of autonomy in its close reference to truth. This relatedness does not mean that A is caused by B, or contrariwise, but that some idea of determination, even the utilitarian and servile one, is fully avoided of human's concern. The paradox suggests that things made by man in order to serve him change rules so that humans now serve things. Second, I would mention the idea of George Fallis (2004; cf. Moore, 2005) who writes that the greatest challenge of today's university might be that it is not the motivator of the development any more but its consequence and, in certain sense, its expense. The social functional system of education might have to do more than to fix its view on goals forced by economy. The question is not only how set university anew at the forefront of the socio-cultural development but how to develop a different culture of interactions between all branches of knowledge within society. To put it somewhat humorously, "to understand the atom is a child's play in comparison with an understanding of children's play". Different academic rankings do not change the essentials.

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#### Anton Mlinar

### John Henry Newman o sveučilištu: aktualnost diskursa starog 160 godina

#### **Sažetak**

Newmanova poznata rasprava o sveučilištu, napisana tijekom ljeta 1852., izvorno je bila zbirka predavanja posvećenih osnivačkom planu novog katoličkog sveučilišta u Dublinu. Iako je imao velikih poteškoća zbog sudskih tužbi u tzv. slučaju Achilli, Newman je svojom raspravom branio dvije glavne ideje integralnog sveučilišnog obrazovanja nužne za bilo koje autonomno zasnivanje i razvoj znanstvenoga znanja. Moja je namjera u ovome članku izložiti ova dva aspekta. Kao prvo, tu je znanje kao samosvrha u odnosu s učenjem, i kao drugo, njegova obrana mjesta teologije (i religije) među drugim disciplinama u sklopu sveučilišnih kurikula. Ove dvije ideje su ključne bilješke za mnogo važnije pitanje autonomije sveučilišnog obrazovanja i kolegijalnog karaktera znanja. Newmanov originalni diskurs je jedna od epizoda njegove potpune posvećenosti kolegijalnosti obrazovnog procesa. Budući da je sveučilište civilizacijski doseg, a ne pitanje političkih ili drugih hijerarhija, promišljanje obrazovanja bi mogla (ili trebala) biti prekretnica promjene sveučilišnog institucionalnog života. Pravo pitanje nije koliko predmeta treba biti uključeno u kurikule kako bi obrazovanje bilo univerzalno, nego koja je veza između njih. S nekim drugim naglaskom, članak se bavi i događajima u razvoju europskoga sveučilišta posljednjih desetljeća.

#### **Ključne riječi**

autonomija, kolegijalnost, obrazovanje, funkcionalni sistemi, liberalno znanje, religija, teologija, sveučilište, John Henry Newman

#### Anton Mlinar

### John Henry Newman zur Universität: Aktualität des 160 Jahre alten Diskurses

#### **Zusammenfassung**

Newmans namhafte Abhandlung über die Universität, niedergeschrieben im Frühling 1852, war ursprünglich eine Sammlung der Vorträge, die einem Gründungsplan für die neue Katholische Universität in Dublin geweiht war. Während er infolge der gerichtlichen Anklage im sogenannten Fall Achilli mit etlichen Erschwernissen zu kämpfen hatte, verteidigte Newman in seiner Abhandlung zwei Hauptideen der integralen universitären Bildung, die notwendig waren für welchen auch immer autonomen Anbruch des wissenschaftlichen Wissens wie auch für dessen Entfaltung. Mein Vorhaben hier heißt, diese zwei Aspekte auszulegen. Erstens fungiert hier das Wissen als Selbstzweck in seinem Verhältnis zum Lernen, und zweitens handelt es sich um seine Verteidigung der Position der Theologie (und der Religion) unter anderen Disziplinen innerhalb des Universitätscurriculums. Die zwei angegebenen Ideen sind als Schlüsselanmerkungen an eine weitaus bedeutendere Problematik angegliedert – hinsichtlich der Autonomie der Universitätsbildung sowie hinsichtlich des kollegialen Charakters des Wissens. Newmans origineller Diskurs repräsentiert eine Episode seiner uneingeschränkten Hingabe der Kollegialität des Bildungsprozesses. Da die Universität eine zivilisatorische Errungenschaft und keine Angelegenheit einer politischen oder irgendeiner anderen Rangordnung ist, könnte (oder sollte) das

*Nachdenken über die Bildung ein Meilenstein in der Änderung des universitären institutionellen Lebens sein. Die eigentliche Frage lautet nicht, wie viele Fächer in die Curricula einzubinden sind, um die Bildung als universal zu formen, sondern was für ein Konnex unter ihnen besteht. Mit einer anderen Betonung greift der Artikel die Geschehnisse aus der Entwicklung der europäischen Universität der vergangenen Jahrzehnte auf.*

**Schlüsselwörter**

Autonomie, Kollegialität, Bildung, funktionelles System, liberales Wissen, Religion, Theologie, Universität, John Henry Newman

Anton Mlinar

**John Henry Newman sur l'université :  
L'actualité d'un discours vieux de 160 ans**

**Résumé**

*Le fameux traité de Newman sur l'université, écrit au printemps 1852, était initialement un recueil de conférences dédiées au plan fondateur d'une nouvelle université catholique de Dublin. Tout en éprouvant de grandes difficultés en raison d'accusations judiciaires dans le cas dit Achilli, Newman soutenait avec son traité deux idées majeures de l'enseignement universitaire intégral, nécessaires à tout commencement autonome d'une connaissance scientifique ainsi que du développement de celle-ci. Mon intention dans cet article est d'exposer ces deux aspects. Premièrement, la connaissance comme sa propre finalité et, deuxièmement, sa défense de la place de la théologie (et de la religion) parmi d'autres disciplines au sein des curriculums universitaires. Références clés, ces deux idées relèvent d'une question bien plus importante encore concernant l'autonomie de l'enseignement universitaire et le caractère collégial de la connaissance. Le discours initial de Newman est l'un des épisodes de son dévouement total à la collégialité du processus d'enseignement. C'est parce que l'université est un acquis civilisationnel – et non pas une question de hiérarchie politique ou autre – que la réflexion sur l'enseignement pourrait (ou devrait) être le tournant du changement de la vie institutionnelle de l'université. La question n'est pas de savoir combien de matières faudrait-il inclure dans les curriculums afin de rendre l'enseignement universel, mais quelle est la relation entre elles. Avec un autre relief, l'article s'intéresse également à des événements dans le développement, ces dernières décennies, de l'université européenne.*

**Mots-clés:**

autonomie, collégialité, enseignement, systèmes fonctionnels, connaissance libérale, religion, théologie, université, John Henry Newman